

THE STRAITS TIMES

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My Point

Financial crisis

'Now is a good time for banks and financial advisers to re-examine their responsibilities to their customers.'

MR JAMES LEONG: 'Just this month, I had my financial planner from a respectable organisation turn lukewarm and quiet after I parted with \$48,000 of my CPF savings into traditional government bonds, which are bleeding from the current meltdown. Repeated requests to allay fears went unanswered because I found out later that he was on vacation in Europe. On the day the news of AIG's financial woes broke, I had my AIA insurance agent brazenly tell me, only after several attempts to get him to return my call, that he does not have the time to call or advise me on what I should do with my endowment plan. His excuse? He had too many clients to attend to and that I should just read the news. Now is probably a good time for banks and financial advisers to seriously re-examine their roles and responsibilities to their customers.'

b>SMRT taxi's F1 surcharge

'Is there a mechanism that prevents operators from blatantly introducing new surcharges?'

MR TAN SHAO YI: 'SMRT's announcement of a \$5 surcharge for taxi pickups during the F1 Grand Prix reeks of opportunism to profit than a need to 'meet the expected increase in demand for taxis after the races'. I am glad this reasoning was not applied to the perennial shortage of taxis that happens just before the midnight surcharge. While SMRT taxis head off to the pickup locations in the event vicinity to profit from this surcharge, may I know if SMRT is concerned that there may be a shortage of its taxis elsewhere when this happens? Do such occasional surcharges that operators attribute to public events fall under the Public Transport Council's (PTC) scrutiny of fares, or is there a mechanism that prevents operators from blatantly introducing new surcharges? There appears to be no longer any creativity in maintaining demand-supply equilibrium other than to introduce surcharges.'

Speakers' Corner red card

'I felt that the issue had to be addressed.'

MR K. SABESAN: 'I wish to express my strong displeasure over the decision of the police to cancel a planned talk at the Speakers' Corner over the absence of Tamil signages at the airport and other tourist attractions, last Friday, 'Red card on race issues at Speakers' Corner'. I was one of those who received the SMS last Thursday night. I strongly supported the initiative not out of hatred towards other races, but felt that the issue had to be addressed.'

Maxwell Market

'The sight of two civilians with rifles milling about in a busy street is disquieting.'

MS AGNES SING: 'My husband and I went to Maxwell Market last Sunday, which was filled with patrons, families on an outing and tourists visiting the temple nearby. But the atmosphere was filled with a sense of unease because two men wearing civilian clothes were carrying rifles. Slung across the shoulder of each man was a belt of bullets. I suspect they were tasked with shooting the birds atop the trees in the vicinity. I understand that the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) had explained previously that the bullets were blanks and that these men merely shot in the air to scare the birds away and prevent them from being a nuisance. But how are tourists and young children to know this? The sight of two civilians with rifles milling about in a busy street is disquieting. To dismiss unnecessary worry, the AVA should consider making these men wear uniforms, install signs informing the public about the bird nuisance and the times when they may see or hear shooting and ensure that the shooters answer queries courteously.'

Route info

'Information on bus routes is still unavailable at many bus stops.'

MR JAMALUDDIN ISMAIL: 'Information on bus routes is still unavailable at many bus stops, which is a put-off for commuters, especially those who have recently given up their cars for public transport, and for the foreigners who live here. Bus guides, although cheap, are not available near every bus stop. Bus guides on the Internet may be useful, but inconvenient for the average commuter. While most bus journeys are planned and quite routine, some bus rides can be a spur-of-the-moment decision. To end up at an unfamiliar bus stop with no bus route information and no one around to ask for directions is frustrating. I hope the Land Transport Authority can make it mandatory for bus operators to put up the information at every stop.'

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